6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1

(*sud*). Accordingly, in the mind of these people, the universe and peace (*mir*) were also identical.[28]

Great calamities occasionally befell the Old-Slavonic communities—frequent raids and plundering by the invaders and slave hunters; then cattle plagues and epidemics. These were thought to have been brought on by certain demons and malevolent ghosts, but the Polesie people knew of ways to cope even with such disasters. Contagious diseases were prevented or stopped by means of magic, especially by the magical powers of women. As for their enemies, the soil cultivators of the Dnieper basin were not prepared for any offensive or defensive warfare and were an easy prey for many aggressors. Being not armed, their defense consisted of hiding themselves. They sought safety in impenetrable marshes and forests and even resorted to such ruses as lying submerged on the bottoms of marshes and breathing by means of cane sticks until the danger was over.[29]

Since the Old-Slavonic agriculturists contracted their marriage unions early in life, as a means of labor supply and since they were not exposed to exhaustion of constant warfare, the region which they originally inhabited soon reached its limits of population. Thus, in spite of their autarchic and intensive agricultural techniques and their attachment to the soil, the early Slav folk were forced to leave their original habitat in search of new lands. They did not migrate in a fury and did not traverse great distances like the mounted nomads of the steppes; rather, they moved slowly and quietly for short distances and by stages always keeping in touch with the mother community from which they had sprung.

In this manner the Old-Slavonic tillers penetrated new regions and territories, not by force and conquest like the predatory steppe raiders, but by cultivating new soil along the river basins, in the midst of forest clearings, drained marshes or irrigated steppes. Living in village communities which remained ethnically uninterrupted, they transplanted and perpetuated in their new homes their native agricultural techniques, their beliefs and customs, their family and community organization, as well as their philosophy of life. Thus as late as the twentieth century, the social organization and personality traits of the Zadruga peo-

6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1

of the Czar, they became increasingly rank-conscious, domineering and abusive toward all lower in rank or under their power.[12]

Such a ruling class, with its open misrule and arbitrariness, could not inspire the subjected classes with confidence and respect. The lack of social and political security was manifested in want of initiative, in disinterest in productive activities, in loose morals, in hazard games, in a low value of human life, and in a general lack of trust.[13]

On the other hand, perhaps as a reaction to these conditions of insecurity and of social disorganization, there was an urge of complete renunciation of the world and its strife, an urge to detach oneself from the group, a tendency to isolate oneself completely from human society and seek personal consolation and personal salvation in religion. This trend of social withdrawal and self-oriented feelings brought about a great development of hermitism and of monastic life. Many of these people, completely detached from human society and preoccupied exclusively with their own self, sought peace and communion with God in lonely, remote depths of forests, in the solitude of the wilds and deserts. Here "far removed from men" they spent their lives in prayer, fasting and self-maceration.

At the same time the masses of the people who lived in great misery and who were exposed to arbitrariness, exploitation, and other forms of oppression on the part of the mighty, sought consolation and hope in supernatural forces. Beliefs in miraculous powers of wonder-working icons and in life-giving properties of the Cross were taking deep roots. On all sides sprang up prophecies and apparitions. Saint men and prophets, often mentally unbalanced, would appear in the streets and openly voice their protest against the Czar and his government.[14]

These were the only signs of an open opposition to the existing system that was becoming increasingly unbearable. Such "idiots" were considered saintly by the people not only because of their strange behavior and their ability to endure extremes of hardship, but also for their unheard of courage to speak openly against the Czar:

6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1

791

They used to go starke naked, save a clout about their middle, with their haire hanging long and wildely about their shoulders, and many of them with an iron coller in chaine about their neckes or middles, even in the very extremity of winter. . . . Among others at this time they have one at Mosco that walketh naked about the streets, and inveyeth commonly against the state and government. . . . Another there was, that dyed not many years agoe . . . that would take upon him to reproove the olde emperour, for all his cruelties and oppressions done towards his people. His body they have translated of late into a sumptuous church neere the emperours house in Mosco, and have canonized him for a saint. Many miracles he doth there. . .[15]

166

Another form of protest or of reaction against the existing conditions consisted of mass vagrancy. Many thousands of these restless people were roaming the roads, the forests, and the deserts, as beggars, as pilgrims or as agricultural nomads. Many of them spent whole lives wandering, unable to find peace and rest.

IV

642
178

Conditions in which abusive dominance-submission relationships, self-concern, lack of trust, and destructive aggression thrive do not favor unification and stability of an empire. Yet the Czardom showed a steady and remarkable development in spite of such unfavorable circumstances. In the course of several centuries it had grown from a small principality into a great world power. Just as in the states of steppe nomads, the social agents which were responsible for self-seeking, power-orientation and internal restlessness and explosiveness encouraged also external expansion. But unlike the empires of the steppes, there were in the Empire of the Czars several circumstances which fostered ideological and moral unity, such as the politico-religious philosophy of the Orthodox Church and conditioning on the family and community level. It was perhaps this combination of the explosive and unifying tendencies which was responsible for steady expansiveness and growing consolidation of the Czardom.

[182]

From its very inception the Russian state was a military soci-

000